“LEGO® System: Football”

A brief game design document by Artworld (UK)

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Target Audience & Age Range Considerations

Although the following ideas and concepts have been produced with young children aged between 5 and 12 in mind, as per the LEGO System range, the audience for a game of this genre is to be extended to incorporate older users.

For the remainder of the document, we will refer to the human in control of the game as the **USER** and mini-figures as **PLAYERS.**

Target Platforms

The game is currently being designed for the PC platform and maybe extended to the Playstation, Nintendo 64 and Sega Dreamcast.

Product Objectives

1. To make a **unique** product that fills a clear gap in the market. Currently football games fall into two clear categories, neither of which is suitable for a younger user. They are;

    - Complex football management games such as Championship Manager, Ultimate Soccer Manager and Premier Manager,
    - Arcade games reliant on dexterity and high degrees of skill, such as EA's FIFA range, World League Soccer and ISS Pro.

    These two categories are filled by games that leave a younger football fan without a computer game that they can enjoy.

2. We intend to make a product that is appealing and **entertaining** to the younger end of the LEGO System target audience (5+) whilst making the nature of game elements scaleable, so older users can be entertained and enjoy a challenge at the same time. This will be further enhanced by using lots of fun, animated sequences to portray the action.

3. To make a game that can be played successfully by multiple players over the Internet. The turn-based nature of the game lends itself perfectly, reducing the latency problems that currently hamper more arcade style games when played online.

4. To make a computer product that can be played alongside the LEGO System Football model game, while keeping the computer product equally as entertaining in its own right.

5. The nature of the age group targeted lends us to add a different slant to the product, allowing us to add more elements usually found in an activity set. Examples of which are out-of-the-box play ideas, such as the swapping of player cards to incorporate into your computer game team and the ability to print out key moments in the game and player reward screens.

6. Another key objective is to make the game visually bright and attractive without a wash of complicated statistics cluttering up the game screen, which we feel would not appeal to the younger market.

7. To provide the user with video and audio feedback so realistic, it feels like the player is sitting on the terraces beside the pitch.

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Game Overview

Overview: The Game of Football

Naturally with a football game, the idea is for the player to play his team against another player or the computer with the intention of scoring more goals, thus winning the game. Essentially this will be done by the user deciding what a player does when he has the ball and what his team does when they haven't got the ball.

The game will contain lots of high quality animated sequences that play after the player makes a decision, many of which will start the same way, but have different outcomes. This way, players will be entertained by the animation whilst still retaining the tension of whether your players will be successful.

To maintain a link between the LEGO System model product and the computer game, we propose that the game use on-screen dice rolls to decide issues such as who wins a tackle, whether a goalkeeper saves a shot etc. For the very youngest players this can be taken out, with the computer deciding the outcome of such an event.

Overview: Age Range Scaleablity

The game has to be playable by players at the youngest end of the LEGO System bracket, namely those aged 5, while still remaining playable by players aged 12 onwards. To address this in game, we will have an option on the first game menu that lets the player select the complexity level.

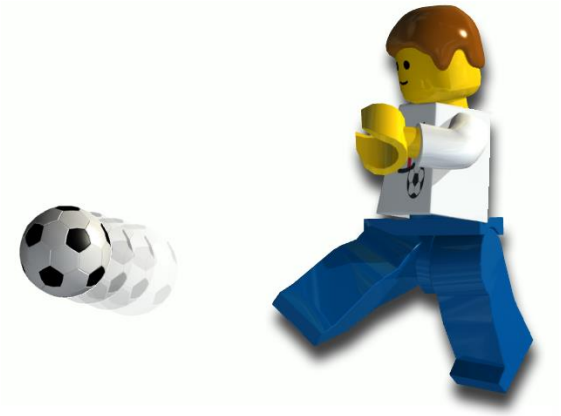
Select Difficulty Level

Easy **Advanced**

Where the 'Easy' level refers to the 5+ age group and the 'Advanced' level refers to older players who want slightly more of a challenge. An example of the difference between the two levels can be found when one of the player's team has possession of the football and clicks the '**PASS**' button.

When playing the 'Easy' level, the player will click '**PASS**', then click on a member of his team to pass to. The computer will then decide whether it is successful or not and play a full-screen animation that reflects this.

Playing the 'Advanced' level requires an element of skill. After clicking '**PASS**' and clicking on the destination player, the user is shown a power meter similar in many ways to ones currently popular in golf games. If the player clicks near to the correct power the pass is made and as per the 'Easy' level, a full-screen animation is played.



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Overview: The Game Interface

The game's interface is designed to make it colourful so players at the younger end of the LEGO System age group will find it appealing. It is also designed in such a way as to leave the screen uncluttered, with menus folding away wherever necessary. The Action menu option on the right slides on and off as needed. The 'current player' window normally just shows the player graphic. If the user then clicks on this, the player animates and his statistics come up in a pop-up window right beside him.

We have made sure that the interface is an **AID** to the gameplay rather than be obtrusive and obstruct the flow of the game as it does in other football games. All the essential information such as the current game time, who's playing and the score are all instantly accessible.

Overview: Control Method

All in-game functions are accessible by moving the mouse and clicking the left button. There will be no forced use of the keyboard, with the exception of typing the player name(s) at the start of the game.

Overview: Competition and Play Modes

The game will initially contain the top eight international teams in the world. The player can play in a variety of competitions and ways chosen at the start of the game from the main menu. This menu will contain the following options,

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- **Tutorial.** This will be a one-player game with the referee acting as an advisor, instructing what the user should click and when.
- **Single Game.** One or two players pick teams, decide the game duration and style of play.
- **League**. This will lead to options to start a new league, load a saved league etc.
- **Cup**. Similarly, options to start a new Cup competition and load a saved game will follow.
- **Network Game**. Options will then take you through connection, joining a league, playing against someone else in a single match etc.
- **Internet Game**. Very similar to Network Game options.

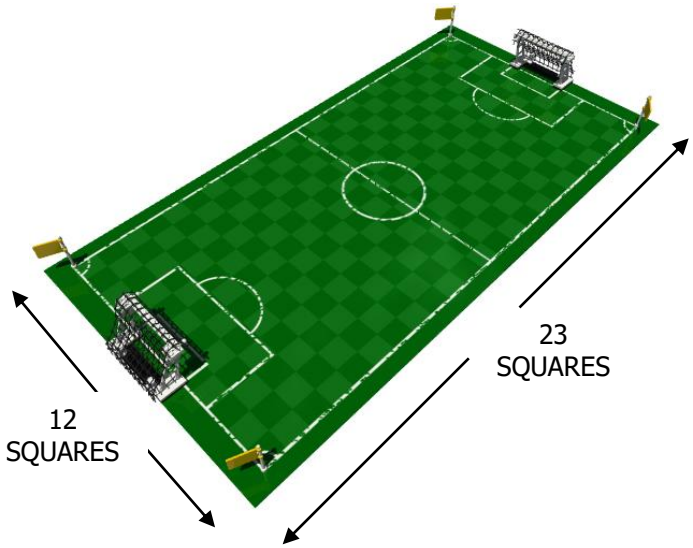
Overview: Network play and The Internet

Social gaming is becoming more and more popular today, with the Internet becoming a natural medium game players use. Because of a number of reasons highlighted below, LEGO System Football is an ideal game to play over networks. Reasons such as,

- The turn-based nature of the game means there are **no latency** problems,
- Works on all speed modems, even 14.4k,
- Teams play in the users own design team strips, individualising the game to the point that strip designs start to get associated with the person behind the team,
- Three varieties of game play options; single match, league, cup
- Fun & friendly chat rooms to increase inter-player communication,

Overview: The Pitch

The pitch in the LEGO System Football game differs very slightly from the current plastic model in so much as it is subdivided into squares across the pitch width as well as lengthwise. This allows us to have a game grid that is complex enough to stimulate an older player as well as still being simple enough for a younger player to understand.



This LEGO model board is 23 divisions long. The computer game will have the same amount of subdivisions lengthwise and 12 divisions across the pitch.

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Overview: Rules

Most normal football rules can be translated into a younger computer version of the game successfully. The *offside* rule will be omitted because of the nature of the target audience. It is a difficult call to make for *linesmen* in real life, so we feel introducing it into a fun game for younger children would only lead to frustration and confusion.

We will maintain a parallel with the board game again with the amount of players on a team. Because of the size of the game grid, we feel an 11-a-side game will be too cramped and complicated. A 5-a-side game is more controllable, due to the game being turn-based, with the user controlling the movement of the entire team. Fewer players also mean the team becomes more personal to the user.

Overview: The Referee

The referee will play a big part in LEGO System Football. As well as the in-game referee, he is also the advisor in the tutorial mode, giving verbal instructions and visual indications specifically what the user should click and when. He will also give praise and allow the user to 'have-another-go' at something if he/she didn't quite complete a task correctly.

When an event happens that calls for a refereeing decision such as a foul, a pre-rendered animation of the referee will pop up in a window and blow his whistle. Underneath the window, the list of his possible decisions will spin round in carousel fashion. Possible decisions being to caution a player, award a 'free' kick, play-on etc. This carousel will then slow down and land on a decision. We feel that the suspense of seeing more favourable decisions spinning by will be very entertaining.

Overview: Customisation

For advanced players who want to customise their team, we will have a player/team editor where the user can create his own players, or pick from a pool of pre-defined ones.

Overview: Other Activities

In LEGO System Football, we will have a number of other features for the very young players to access that do not refer directly to the game. Any area of the screen that the user clicks on will produce something of interest. These little touches are entertaining and should extend the longevity of the game because there should always be something new to see or hear.

After a match, a screen will display the back pages of a LEGO newspaper. A photo taken from the game, the player's name and a headline that reflects what happened in the match will be displayed and will also incorporate the user's photo if they have provided one. The user will also be able to print this page as a record of their achievements that they can show to friends.

Other printable screens are the League/Cup positions screen and the team editor screen (Only available to more advanced players).

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How The Game Works

Kick Off!

The game starts with the toss of a coin with the user then clicking on heads or tails. If successful, the game starts.

The user then clicks on a button on the action menu (Pass, dribble etc). In 'Easy' mode, the game will follow the instruction and decide whether the action was successful. In 'Advanced' mode, the user will have to perform an extra step. As described earlier, this can be skill based or luck based on the roll of a dice.

The game is turn based with the player making a move, followed by the computer/opponent making their move, then back again. This continues until the end of the game where the team who has scored the most goals wins. If the game is a draw, the user selects whether to exit, to play extra time, penalties or a golden-goal situation (where next goal wins). In this 'Golden goal' situation, these choices will repeat if a draw is the result of the extra time.

Decisions and Variables

In LEGO System Football, decisions and variable-outcomes are decided in one of three ways. These being,

1. By the computer picking at random.
2. By the roll of a single die or by the roll of two competing dice.
3. By the use of a skill-based meter

Dice (Advanced level)

Dice are used in the 'Advanced' level game To decide an outcome. Examples of which are tackles and whether a Goalkeeper saves a shot. The user rolls the on-screen dice and the computer/opposition player also rolls one. The one with the highest score wins and a draw results in a re-roll until a win occurs.

When the time comes to roll the on-screen dice, the dice button will flash indicating to the user that he/she has to click the dice button to roll them. When this happens, the dice will jump about and settle on a number.

Rolling a 1!

Rolling a 1 on the dice will cause the selected action to fail. In the case of a pass it will fall short or be intercepted, a player attempting a run will stumble or bump into someone and a player attempting a shot will mis-kick. These random elements make the game less predictable. It also means shots and passes going astray can go out for *throw-ins* and *goal kicks*, which are very much part of real-life football.

Rolling a 6!

In certain situations in the game, rolling a 6 will guarantee success. Such an occasion happens when taking a free kick around the opposition penalty area. If the chooses to try a shot, a 6 will guarantee the ball curls successfully round the wall into the net. Rolling a 4 or 5 could score, but the keeper has a good chance of saving it.

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Action Menu: When in Possession

The player has a number of options on the action menu at his/her disposal. These options change and become active/inactive depending on the situation. An example of which is when the ball goes out of play for a throw-in. The menu option will change to just show '**Throw**' instead of the usual in-possession or without-possession options. There is no need to select an 'active' player because it is assumed that the player with the ball is the user's active player. This is always the case, with the exception of the '**Move-Player**' option. (Details of which are covered below.)

When in possession, the following options become available,

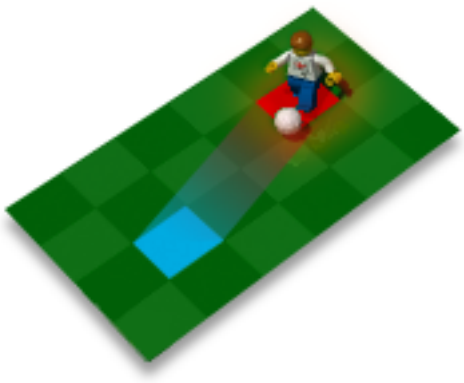
- **Dribble**
- **Sprint**
- **Pass**
- **Shoot**
- **Cross (advanced only)**
- **Move Player (advanced only)**

When the game is being played in 'Easy' mode the user will only be required to click firstly on the option and then the destination. The computer will decide the outcome and play an animated sequence.

Things are slightly different if the game is being played in 'Advanced' mode. Once the player has clicked an option the action menu will change, removing all the options except the one the user selected. Depending on the option selected a control menu will appear underneath. I.e. If 'PASS' is the action selected, then a 'Power Meter' will appear underneath, requiring the player to set the power of the pass. If successful, the computer will then play an animated sequence depicting a successful pass.

Dribbling

When the user elects to dribble with the ball, moving the mouse over the pitch area will cause squares to light up in a line between the player in possession and the mouse pointer. This line will extend to a maximum of 6 squares in any direction, representing the amount of ground the users player can cover in one go.



In 'Easy' mode, the longer the distance the player wants to dribble, the more chance there is of losing the ball, tripping over etc.

In 'Advanced' mode, the player has to click on the '**Dribble'** menu option then on the pitch to decide where to dribble with the ball. The menu options under '**Dribble'** will fold away and a skill meter will then appear in their place.

To use the 'skill meter' the player clicks and holds the mouse button down, whereby an indicator will start rising up. On the skill meter will be a small bar that defines the right place to release the mouse. Releasing too early will mean the player stumbles, loses control, or is tackled. The same happens if the user releases too late. Releasing the mouse close to or exactly on the marker will ensure that the dribble is successful. A full screen animated sequence then portrays the action. The meter will gradually become quicker as the player advances through a league or cup competition, in order to keep the users skill increasing.

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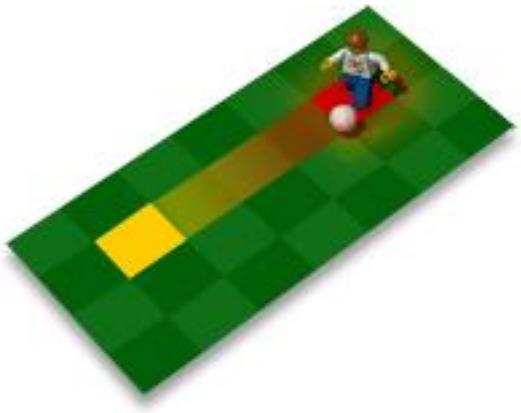
Sprinting

The sprint option is a bit of a gamble to the player. In essence it is very similar to the dribble option, but instead of using skill to beat opponents, the team member tries to run quickly with the ball.



Generally, the advantage of using sprint rather than a dribble is that the player can travel twice as far as he can when dribbling. The disadvantage is that he/she is also less likely to succeed. This does slightly change depending on which player the user attempts to sprint with.

- Attackers have a 75% chance of being successful when sprinting as they are generally quick and agile,
- Mid-fielders have a 50% chance of being successful and
- Defenders have a 25% chance of being successful sprinting as they are slower.

Passing

The user selects this option when he/she wants to pass the ball on from the player who currently has it to another member of their team. This is done simply by clicking on the '**PASS**' button, then on a player on your team. After the '**PASS**' button has been selected, team members flash to indicate that the user should click on one of them next. Moving the mouse pointer over any one of them will cause the player to be highlighted.

When playing in 'Easy' mode, the user just clicks the mouse over the destination player and the computer will decide whether the pass was successful or not. Similarly to dribbling, the likelihood of the pass being made successfully reduces as the distance the user tries to pass increases.

When playing in 'Advanced' mode, a 'Power Meter' will appear underneath the '**PASS'** menu option, requiring the player to set the power of the pass. The way this works is exactly the same as the skill meter works for dribbling. The target pass distance is shown as a little marker and the user simply has to stop the power meter on, or very near to that mark. Stop it too early and the pass will fall short/be intercepted, too late and the pass will be too hard and the target player will not be able to control the ball.

Maintaining a similarity between these Skill/Power meters is very important, as we want the game to remain playable in the 'Advanced' mode even for younger children.

As with every action in the LEGO System Football game, a full screen animated sequence will be shown illustrating the action.

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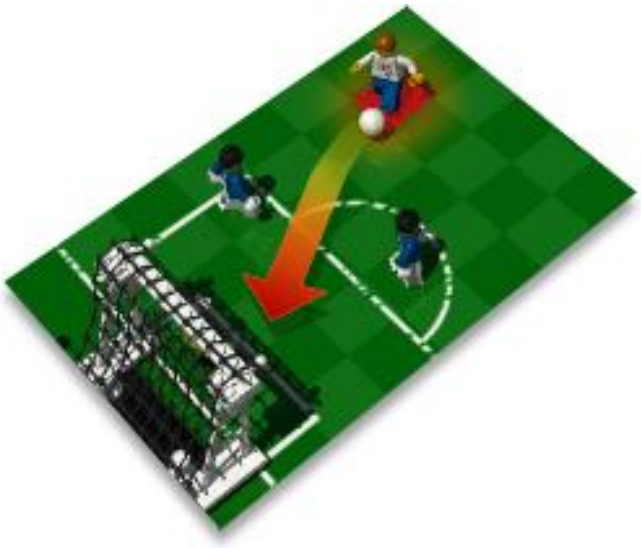
Shooting on Goal

Selecting this option tries a shot on the opponent's goal. The option does not become available until a member of the user's team has possession of the football around the edge of the opponent's penalty area. Triggering a shot on goal is done by moving the mouse pointer over the action menu on the right of the screen and clicking on the '**SHOOT**' option.

In 'Easy' mode, the user will then only have to click on the opponent's goal to perform the action. The shot will be aimed towards where the player clicks. I.e. should the user click on the left-hand side of the goal, then the shot will be aimed towards the left of the goal. The computer will decide the outcome of the shot and play an animated sequence to depict this.



In 'Advanced' mode, the user will be prompted to set the power of the shot using a 'Power-Meter' in the same way he/she would do when passing.

If the shot successfully reaches the goalmouth, then the user rolls an on-screen dice for his player and the goalkeeper also rolls a dice. The highest score brings success to that side. If the players dice is higher than the goalkeepers, then the shot will go in and an animated sequence will show this. If the goalkeepers score is higher, it means that he has saved the shot. The dice difference will depend on what happens next.

- If the attacker rolls a 1 on the dice, the shot will be off-target and the goalkeeper will not even have to make a save.
- If the goalkeepers score is 1 or 2 greater than the player's score, he will save the shot but the ball will escape back onto the field, where an attacker can get in quickly and have another shot.
- If the score is 3 or 4 over the player's score, the shot will be tipped over the bar or pushed round the post resulting in a corner kick to the player.
- If the goalkeepers dice roll is a 6 then it is a perfect save and the goalkeeper catches the ball.

Of course, these will be transparent to the player who will perform his shot, roll his on-screen dice, and then watch an animated sequence to see the result.

Move-Players (Advanced Mode Only)

When playing the game in 'Easy' mode, the players team members are moved up and down the field automatically when the player has his turn. However, their range will be limited so that the defenders stay in their own half and attackers stay up the field.

The '**Move-Players'** option is only available when playing the game in 'Advanced' mode. Using this allows the user to move his team around, rather than kicking the ball or running with it. This allows the player to build up attacks and put pressure on an opponent's goal but also allows him/her to become short numbered in defence. This should make for some varied match styles. E.g. Mid-field battle, On-the-Break, All-out-Attack etc.

Moving players can only be done on the user's turn and is very simple. One the user has clicked the '**Move-Players**' menu option, he/she is asked to roll an on-screen dice. As

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per the LEGO System model game, the user can then move his players the amount of squares the dice shows up.

Moving the players then is merely a case of clicking a player followed by a click on the pitch to show where you want that player to move to. The maximum distance the first player can move is the number rolled on the dice. If the user elects to move him less than that maximum, the remaining moves are held while the user moves another team member. This moving of players continues until the number of moves brought about by the dice roll has been used up, whereby the game switches to the other team/computer's turn.

Cross (Advanced Mode Only)

This option becomes available when one of the players team members reaches the sides of the opponent's penalty area with the ball. On his next turn he/she can then elect to cross the ball rather than passing it in towards a striker. The advantage of using cross rather than a pass is as follows. When crossing the ball into a striker, he/she gets an attack on goal automatically if it reaches him/her accurately. Normally, a shot on goal would need 2 turns. One to pass it into the striker and one to actually perform the shot.

Crossing the ball is performed in the same way as a pass would, i.e. with a power meter. The user clicks on the '**CROSS**' action menu option, then on a player who he/she wishes to cross to. A 'Power-Meter' then appears with the optimum accuracy marked on it. The nearer the user stops the power bar to this mark decides what happens with the cross.

- If the user releases much too early, the cross will be mis-aimed and go out of play, or be intercepted.
- If the user releases the power meter a little too early or a little too late, the cross will reach the striker but he will have to control the ball first.
- If the user releases the power meter exactly on the accuracy mark, then the striker gets an automatic header on goal, the result of which is decided at random by the computer.
- If the user releases much too late, the cross is over hit and goes out of play.

An animated sequence will now play showing what happened

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Action Menu: When Not In Possession

When the user's team is not in possession of the football, he/she has a different set of actions to perform. They are designed to win the ball and to prevent your opponent from getting close to goal.

If the user is not in possession of the football, then he/she is required to select a player to make a move. Once this player has been clicked, the options menu becomes active and displays the following options;

- **TACKLE**
- **MARK**
- **SPRINT**
- **MOVE-PLAYERS (ADVANCED ONLY)**

Tackling

This option is designed to allow the users defending team to win the ball back from the computer/opposition.

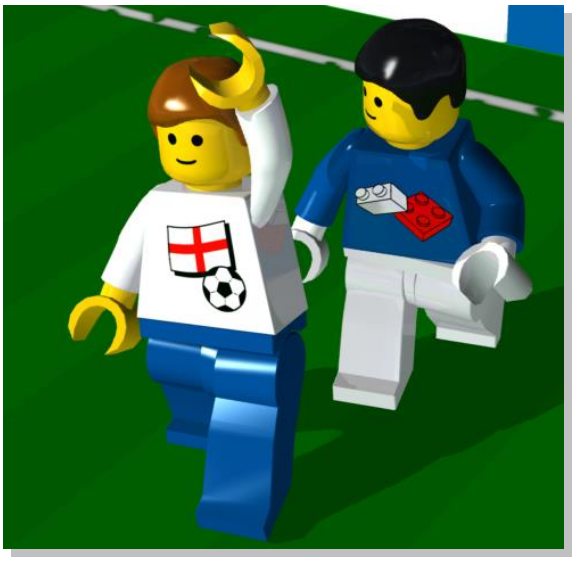
The user will be allowed to select any current player on his/her turn and attempt to tackle any opposition player with the ball, regardless of where he/she is on the field. If the destination player is too far away, the action will still be allowed but the game will display an animated sequence showing the player running towards the opposition player in possession, but run out of breath before he/she gets there. After seeing that tackling from too far away does not work, but tackling with a player nearby does, the user will learn a lesson in successful tackling.

When playing the game in 'Easy' mode, the user has to click on the '**Tackle**' menu option, then click on the opposition player who has the ball. The currently selected player will attempt to win the ball from the opponent. The computer will decide who wins the tackle and play an animated sequence to reflect this.

When playing in 'Advanced' mode, things are slightly different as the user has to roll an on-screen dice against the computer/opponent to decide who wins the tackle. The one with the highest score comes away with the ball. As with everything in LEGO System Football, an animated sequence will depict the outcome of the contest.

Marking

Marking is where a player on the defending team moves close to one of the opposing attackers, attempting to make it difficult for him to receive a pass, move with the ball and pass. Once a player is marked, the chance of him receiving a pass successfully reduces by 30%, so when not in possession of the ball, it is a good tactic for the user to mark as many of the oppositions forwards as he/she can. More aware players will soon realise this



Mini-figure being marked

In both 'Easy' and 'Advanced' mode, the user is required to click on the '**Mark**' action menu option, then on an opposition player. As with tackling, if the opposition player is too far away from the

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users currently selected player, the resultant animation will show the player running out of breath before he reaches the targeted player.

Sprinting

When not in possession of the ball, sprinting is a means of getting the selected player from where he/she stands, towards a target quickly. This target being such things as,

1. a loose ball that had been deflected,
2. an opposition player with the ball,
3. a lone opposition forward who has a lot of room to work.

The action works in exactly the same way as it does when in possession of the ball. The only difference being that if the user is playing in 'Advanced' mode, an inaccurate click on the skill meter will make the player trip or stumble, causing him not to get to the square intended.

Move-Players (Advanced Mode Only)

For players playing in 'Easy' mode, this happens automatically and is transparent to the user. For those playing the game in 'Advanced' mode, this works exactly as it does when in possession of the ball.

Mini-figure crowd enjoying the action

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‘Dead Ball’ Situations

A ‘dead-ball’ situation occurs when an infringement of the rules occurs, or when the ball has left the field of play.

Although there is no direct way for the user to infringe the rules directly, they can occur as a result of a computer generated random event. Such events can be the result of tackles or handling the football. The referee calls this foul and makes one of a possible number of decisions. Decisions such as;

- To award the recipient of the foul a ‘free’ kick,
- To award the recipient of the foul a ‘penalty’ kick, if the infringement occurred inside the penalty area,
- To give the player a telling-off, followed by the award of a ‘free’ kick,
- To produce a yellow card, warning a player not to infringe the rules again, again followed by the award of a ‘free kick’,
- To produce a red card to a player who has infringed the rules too often. The player then has to leave the field and take no further part in the game. A ‘free’ kick situation then occurs

‘Free’ Kick

‘Free’ kicks occur when a member of the opposite team fouls a player in possession of the ball outside of the penalty area. The game stops and the referee orders a ‘free’ kick. The kicker then gets chance to pass the ball from the place the infringement occurred, or attempts a shot on goal. Either way, the defending team then get chance to build a ‘wall’ of players who have to stand at least 10 yards away. (For the game we will make this 3 squares). This ‘wall’ is built automatically and is generally built when the ‘free’ kick is in shooting range of the goal.

Taking a ‘free’ kick- bending the ball around the wall!

Taking an attacking ‘free’ kick.

Any time one of the user’s player’s is fouled outside the penalty box, a free kick will occur. If it is outside of shooting range, the player will be presented with a normal situation, but with the action menu only showing ‘**Pass**’ as the selectable option. It acts exactly as it does in normal free play and the passing differences found between playing ‘Easy’ and ‘Advanced’ also apply.

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If a member of the user's team is fouled outside the penalty box, but within shooting range, the user is presented with two options on the action menu; '**Pass**' and '**Shoot**'.

In 'Easy' mode the '**Shoot**' option just makes the player take his kick. The computer decides the outcome and plays an animated sequence to show this.

In 'Advanced' mode, clicking the '**Shoot**' menu option prompts the player to roll an on-screen dice against the computer/opponent. The results of which are;

- Rolling a 1 means the kick fails completely. The kicker falls over, mis-kicks the ball or sends the ball wide or high of goal.
- If the kickers score is more than the goalkeeper's dice, the kick has a chance of going in. The higher the roll, the more likely it is to go in. The ball can hit the wall, the frame of the goal, the goalkeeper or can go in. Possibilities could be a really powerful blast that goes right through the wall or a banana-like curler that goes round the wall and in. We will have many of these that vary between the spectacular and the very humourous.

Defending a 'free' kick.

When defending a free kick when outside the penalty box there are two possible scenarios. Firstly, when the kick occurs outside the range of a direct shot on goal. When this happens, the game plays as it does normally. I.e. the computer/opponent is in possession of the football, passes it away and the user has to try and get control of it. The second scenario occurs when the infringement occurs and the computer/opposition decides to take a shot on goal.

In 'Easy' mode, the computer decides the outcome of the shot and plays an animated sequence depicting the action.

When the game is being played in 'Advanced' mode and the opposition elects to shoot, the user is invited to click on three players to make his/her defensive wall out of. Once one of those players has been selected, he/she will run over from their position on the field and stand in the wall, whereby the user then picks the next until all three are in the wall. Once the wall is built, the player is invited to roll an on-screen dice against the computer/opposition.

Penalty Kick

A penalty kick situation happens if an infringement of the rules such as a handball or a foul occurs inside the penalty area. The nearest attacking player to the incident then steps up to take the kick.

Mini-figure taking a Penalty

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When the game is being played in 'Easy' mode, the user is prompted to press the shoot button on the options menu and the computer makes a decision as to whether the goalkeeper saves the kick or not.

A full-screen animated sequence displays the result of the kick.

In 'Advanced' mode, the user is prompted to roll an on-screen dice against the goalkeeper.

- If the kicker rolls a 1 on the die, the shot will be off-target and the goalkeeper will not even have to make a save.
- If the kickers score is higher than the goalkeepers, then his shot is on target and goes in.
- If the goalkeepers score is 1 or 2 over the kicker's score, he will save the shot but the ball will escape back onto the field, where an attacker can get in quickly and have another shot.
- If the goalkeepers score is 3 or 4 over the kicker's score, the shot will be tipped over the bar or pushed round the post resulting in a corner kick to the player.
- If the goalkeepers dice roll is a 6 then it is a perfect save and the goalkeeper catches the ball.
- If both the goalkeeper and the kicker roll a 6 then they are prompted to roll again until a difference occurs.

As before, this is all transparent to the user and he/she just sees the outcome of the dice battle as an animated mini-figure sequence.

Goal Kick

Goal kicks occur when a shot goes out of play behind the goal without touching a defender or the goalkeeper on the way through.

When playing the game in 'Easy' mode, the user is prompted to press the kick button on the options menu. An animated sequence will then show the goalkeeper kicking the ball from the edge of his 6-yard box into the middle of the pitch somewhere. Normal play resumes from here.

When playing the game in 'Advanced' mode, the user is asked to click an area of the pitch he/she wishes to kick the ball to. From hereon, the action follows the same lines as a passing action (with a Power-Meter). The difference being that the ball can be kicked much further than a pass can. Normal play resumes once the kick is completed.

Corner Kick

Corner kicks occur when the ball goes of play behind the goal after touching a member of the defending team. The ball is placed on the corner of the playing field and kicked into play by one of the attacking team's players. To the game they operate in a very similar way to crosses do.

When playing the game in 'Easy' mode, the user is prompted to press the cross button on the options menu, where the computer will decide how the action unfolds. An animated sequence will show this. The results of this kick could be;

- Poor kick. The Ball goes out of play or hits a defender.
- Accurate kick. Ball lands at the feet of an attacker. The player is then prompted to press the '**Shoot**' button as in normal play.
- The goalkeeper comes out to catch the ball in flight.
- Ball is passed out to a mini-figure on the edge of the penalty area

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When playing in 'Advanced' mode, the user is prompted to select a mini-figure to aim the corner kick at. The rest of the functionality follows exactly as a 'cross' does. A 'Power-Meter' will then appear with the accuracy marker set. The nearer the user stops the power bar to the accuracy mark, the more likely the player is to receive the ball. If the user stops the power bar exactly on the accuracy mark, a perfect kick occurs and the attacker gets an automatic shot/header on goal.

Throw-In

When the ball leaves the field from either side of the pitch, the team who was without the ball just prior to it leaving the field get to throw the ball back into play.

For players playing the game in 'Easy' mode, clicking on the highlighted '**Throw**' menu throws the ball to the nearest player on the user's team, to a maximum distance of of 6 squares. If the target player is outside this 6 square limit, the ball is thrown in their direction, but does not reach them and remains on the square it lands in.

Players who are playing the game in 'Advanced' mode are required to select a player to attempt to throw the ball to. A 'Power-Meter' then appears underneath the '**Throw**' menu item. This acts in exactly the same way as a pass does, with the user required to stop the power bar on or close to the accuracy mark.

Mini-figure taking a 'throw-in'

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Other Activities

In LEGO System Football, the very youngest players will be as entertained by what is going on on-screen as they are with the football action. To address this, we propose to introduce a range of activities to the product that the younger player will enjoy.

In-game entertainment

Any part of the screen the user clicks on will animate and play sound. Such things as,

1. Clicking on an area of the crowd will cause that section to animate. They will wave flags and banners, jump, clap and sing. We intend to have many crowd samples, so the user should never hear two the same within a large number of mouse clicks.
2. Clicking on a player on the field causes him to turn round, wave and say "hello" to the user. Repeated clicking on him can cause a number of responses, such a giggling as though tickled. Again, we intend to have a number of varied and humorous animations present, so the user will remain amused by them for considerable time.
3. Should the user click on one of the national flags of the teams playing, it waves about in the wind, playing a quick snippet of that nation's national anthem.
4. All the essential 'action' zones such as menus and so on will animate and make sounds.
5. Clicking on the scorecard carrying mini-figures will cause them to animate and say "hello". Their voice will also reflect the mood they are in. I.e. when their team is winning, they will be happy and when their team is losing, their voice will be a little sad. These figures will also animate when a goal is scored, a foul is committed and other key points in the game.

After the Game

When the game is over, the user is presented with the back page of a LEGO newspaper. It will show a snapshot from the game and a related headline containing the users name and team.

- If the game ended in a win for either side, then the screen shot will be one of a mini-figure celebrating or a snap-shot of the winning goal going in. The headline would read something like, "*JOHNS MIGHTY REDS HIT FOR SIX*", "*PETERS ITALY TRIUMPH*" or "*HELENS WALES LOSE AGAIN 4-0*", with an appropriate picture.
- If the game ended goal-less then the headline will involve another key incident such as a sending off.
- Failing that, a humourous picture of some of the crowd falling asleep would be used, with a headline reflecting the 0-0 score line.

On this headline screen, the user will be allowed to various things. There will be buttons along the bottom of the screen for,

- Saving his/her newspaper picture as a .bmp file to disk.
- Saving his/her newspaper picture as a Windows backdrop image.
- Printing the picture.

This will allow players to take their printouts to their friends and show what they have achieved.

Other printing options will be available on the player/team editor screen (available only to players playing the game in 'Advanced' mode) and on the League/Cup position screen.

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Internet Play

We intend to make LEGO System football a game that is very playable on the Internet. Due to the turn-based nature of the game, the latency problems that hamper arcade games are not an issue. There are a number of ways that the game can be played over the Internet and there are a number of ways that we can present it.

When Internet play is selected, a number of options become available to the player. They are;

- **Chat.** Players can chat in a room with others online, challenge each other to matches, chat about their league etc.
- **Single Match.** This is where the user connects to the single play lobby, then picks a player to play against. A 'START NEW GAME' option is also available, where the player then starts a game and waits for another player to join.
- **League Competition.** This option leads onto another screen where the player can elect to Start a new league up, or join a league that is still taking in new players.
- **Information.** This section is where the user can find out the state of the various leagues, cups and information about any user or their team.
- **Cup Competition.** Selecting this option leads the player onto another menu where the player can elect to join in a Cup that is still taking in teams.
- **News/Bulletin board.** Here players can leave messages informing other players when new league and cup competitions are due to start. From here users can also view results from league matches that have taken place and download highlights to view. *(Technical note: These highlight files will be very, very small. All the data required to play them back will be contained within the original product. The only extra data that will need to be downloaded will be strip designs. As 32x32/64x64 textures these will amount to a couple of kb of data, downloadable by even a 14.4k modem connection and a poor line in a couple of seconds.)*

The Chat Option

After selecting the chat option, the user is shown a list of existing chat rooms currently open and an option at the bottom to open a new chat room. Clicking on one of the existing chat rooms leads into that room, where the user can freely chat with other players present, arrange coming fixtures etc.

Selecting 'NEW CHAT ROOM' will then prompt the user to type in a room name. Once entered, other users can freely join this chat room and talk with the host.

Single Match

Selecting the Single match option leads the user into a single player lobby where other single players and matches are taking place. Here the user can do a number of things. They are,

- **Arrange Fixture**. This is a simple 1-on-1-chat window where the users can talk. Also on that screen will be a 'Start Match' option, a 'Cancel' button and a 'Join Game' option which by default, is ghosted out and un-selectable. As soon as one of the two players has clicked 'Start Match', the 'Join Game' option becomes available to the other player and his/her 'Start Game' button is then ghosted out. At any time during that loop, pressing the cancel button will return them to chat.
- **Watch Game**. This option will allow a player to watch a game currently in progress between two other players.

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- **Review Highlights**. This option will allow the user to watch the highlights of any game played during the previous week. These highlights will contain the important match features, such as red card offences and goals.
- **News/Bulletin board**. Here the user will be able to view messages left by other players and insert ones of their own.
- **Send Email**. This option allows the user to send mails to other players. Instead of having to know other users email addresses and type them in, we will simplify this by just having the user click on another player's name. The message they then type in will be sent to them.

League Competition

Leagues are a complex system to try and implement on the Internet, where there is never a guarantee players can play at certain times. This is multiplied by the fact that international time zones mean that when one user wants to play at 7pm, which for another player may be 2am.

To alleviate this problem, we propose to make league play in LEGO System Football fixture based, where players are informed of WHO they are to play in the week.

The two players will both receive an email from the system informing them of their coming fixture. The message will also contain other relevant information such as the current league table, with both teams highlighted. It will also have the other players name and email address present. It is then up to the two players to arrange a time when they are both online so that they can then play their game.

Also contained in the email sent to the players will be a section informing them about geographical location of their opponent and the time-zone difference between them. The email will also make a recommendation to the players what time they should arrange their matches between. E.g. As mentioned before, if the time difference between the location of the two players is +6 hours, then player 1 will receive an email recommending they ought to arrange the match before 3pm his/her time (9pm opponent time) and vice versa.

Next time the players log onto the LEGO server, the game result and statistics will be uploaded. (As before, this data is very, very small and will only take a second or so to upload). Should either of the players not log on before the result date, there are two options.

1) The match should be called void and will have to be played again at a later date.

2) The match will be flagged as having a 'late' result and will remain so for a couple of days. If after a period of 2 or 3 days neither player has logged on, then a weighted random result will be made up, based upon how many games a team has won previously. (I.e. teams that have won more matches should have better form and would be likely to win.)

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Selecting the League Competition option on the Internet options takes the player to a menu screen where he/she can,

- **Start New League.** This option allows the user to create a new league. Options available here are;
    1) **League name.** This is where the user can enter a name for the league.
    2) **Max. Amount of teams.** Up to a maximum of 8.
    3) **Amount of times to play each of the other teams.** This can be 1, 2 or 4, leading to leagues lasting 7, 14 or 28 weeks respectively.
    4) **Starting Date.** This is the date when the match fixtures will be made up. If there are not a full complement of 8 teams at the date of the first match, the league will continue with the amount currently available. Any team wanting to join can do so and will start with the same amount of points as the bottom team.
- **Join League.** This option leads to a screen containing a list of leagues currently in progress. Besides the League name, there will be details such as the number of teams currently involved. Clicking on any league brings up the current table of points. If the league is still accepting users, there will be a button at the bottom of the screen saying 'JOIN LEAGUE'. Clicking on this then enters the user's team name into the league and gives the player the same amount of points as the team at the bottom. The fixtures are then shifted along to incorporate the user's team.
- **Review Highlights**. This option will allow the user to watch the highlights of any game played during the previous week. These highlights will contain the important match features, such as red card offences and goals.
- **News/Bulletin board**. Here the user will be able to leave messages and view messages left by other players.
- **Send Email**. This option allows the user to send mails to other league members, allowing easy arranging of coming games etc.

Cup Competition

These will be competitions set up by the LEGO server at regular intervals and when real-life competitions such as the European Championships or the World Cup are taking place. They will be knockout based and can have prizes given out to the winning player. Controls of playing games will be similar to those set out for league matches- i.e. being informed of the coming fixture by email and leaving to players to sort the match out

League and cup game results are uploaded automatically when a player logs onto the LEGO System Football game server. If the player does not play a match for any reason or neglects to log on to upload results, the game server will send an email to the player reminding him/her to do so.

The latest players will be able to submit results will be 9pm each Sunday. This will allow players all weekend to play their games, which, due to cheaper weekend phone call charges, are when we feel the majority of players will be playing the game online.

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Customising the Team (Advanced Mode Only)

Players who elect to play the game in 'Advanced' mode will be allowed to customise their team. A screen will be available where the user can,

- Edit the manager's name (that's the user!) and pick a picture for his face from the collection of LEGO mini-figure faces. The user can also import a .bmp file to use as the manager's face. This will allow the user to put a scanned picture of him/herself in.
- Edit shirt, shorts and sock colours and design from a preset selection. This selection will be made up of the component strip parts from the teams present in the game.
- Choose from a large selection of LEGO mini-figure faces and hairstyles.
- Choose to make custom player faces made up out of the component parts of their faces. The user can cycle through the different eye, mouth, hair and beard styles and create their own custom player
- Edit player names and attributes.
- Save his/her team for future use. These teams can then be swapped on disk with friends, or uploaded to the Internet. An option will be available here where the user's team photo can be printed out or saved as their Windows backdrop.

Future Expansion

With a game of this nature, there is a great deal of expansion possibilities. One of which is to produce a management add-on. In such a product, the game style is changed to one based upon the trade of players, management of funds and expansion of facilities. To maintain the appeal to the younger audience, this would be presented in a fun and humourous style not dissimilar to that of Bullfrog's Theme Park.

To break down the multi-national financial differences between countries, we would use some common currency such as 'trading points'.

The match-day part of the game would be played in the same way as the generic product, but in between matches the user will be able to put his/her players onto the transfer market and trade them with other players worldwide. When viewing players to purchase in the transfer market, the user would be able to view the player's statistics, club history and animations showing some of his skills. I.e. a striker will have 5-10 highlights of his goals, a mid-fielder will have highlights showing tackles and passes.

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Each player will have more meaningful statistics, such as,

- **Goal Keeping**. (Only applicable to goalkeepers). It shows their ability to save shots.
- **Passing**. A high level of this will mean his/her passes are more successful.
- **Shooting**. Players with this ability are more likely to score.
- **Tackling**. Highly skilled tacklers will win the ball more often in 50-50 chances.
- **Health**. Healthy players will retain sprinting and dribbling abilities for longer periods, players with low health will become less successful in these areas later on in the game.

These will then weight the balance of random decisions. I.e. a player with a high tackling skill will be more able to win the ball in challenges than one without. The skill levels of a player will be reflected in his value.

The user will have other management duties such as the maintenance of the stadium and facilities, training and the trading of players.

Marketing Ideas

There are many options available with a computer product such as this.

An example of this is to have statistical information present in the LEGO System football mini-figure packs and the computer game. When the user buys a player or team of mini-figure models, their abilities can be put on a statistical sheet in the pack. The purchaser can see how good at passing, shooting and running each of their models are and translate that into the computer game. Each pack can have a 'Skill-code', which the user can enter into the player editor in the computer game. The game can then also contain not only the default and user-designed teams, but also actual teams that they can buy from toy retailers.

Having this 'Skill-code' means users can't just enter random codes at will to create players and teams. They have to buy a model team/player and get the information from a skill-card. Maybe the packs can also be priced according to skill levels of the teams contained within?

Players playing the football game against other players on the Internet can form leagues on the LEGO web site whose results can be published monthly in the LEGO comic.

In the team strip editor we could allow the user to print out his/her designed strip onto blank sticker sheets. Blank LEGO System mini-figures can be sold and the user can then make their custom team to play with on the board game.

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Summary

- A **unique** product that fills a gap in the market; no other computer-based product exists for the younger age group,
- Specifically targeted at the younger **LEGO System age group**, namely those between 5 and 12,
- Simple enough to be played by a younger player with **ONE finger.** 3 mouse clicks are all that's needed to make a move,
- Variable difficulty making it **simple** enough for the young and more **challenging** for older players,
- Teams play in the users **own designed** team strip, which can be printed onto stickers to place on blank LEGO mini-figure models,
- Designed to **complement the board game**, where families can play together on the computer and with the models at the same time,
- **Out-of-the-box** activities, such as trading of player mini-figures and printed newspaper headlines,
- **Printing** screens, giving the user hard copies of their achievements,
- A huge variety of **humourous** animations, to entertain both the young and young-at-heart,
- A strong **Internet** game, designed with low bandwidth and minimal latency problems firmly in mind,
- **Works on all speed modems** even down to 14.4k, due to the vast majority of information being stored locally and transferable packets kept small,
- Fun & friendly **chat** rooms, to make communication with fellow user's simple and easy to use,
- **Expandable,** allowing scope for future add-on products. New team collections, Special Cup editions and management add-ons possible,
- Video and audio feedback so **realistic** it feels like the player is sitting on the terraces beside the pitch,
- **NUMEROUS gameplay options**; single match, league, cup and many others,
- **Intuitive interface**, that is an AID to gameplay rather than a hindrance.

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Glossary

Center Circle. This is the center region of the pitch. The only player's allowed in this area at kick-off time are two players from the team who win the toss. The ball is kicked off from here at the start of each half of the match and after a goal is scored. At all other times when the ball is in play it acts like any other normal area of the field.

Corner Kick. Awarded to the attacking team at the opposition end if the ball goes out of play off one of the defending team's players. The ball is kicked into play by a member of the attacking team, from the small 1'x1' area near to the corner flag. The kick is taken from the side of the goalmouth that the ball left the field of play.

Cross. A passing move performed by an attacking player from the wide area at the side of the penalty area. The ball is kicked across-ways from the side towards an attacker near the center of the goalmouth.

Dead-ball. This is the situation when the ball is not actively in play but is on the field. The ball becomes live again once kicked by the team in possession. The team not in possession is not allowed to touch the ball until the team in play has.

Defensive Wall. This is made when a team has to face a free kick awarded to the opposition. Players line up to make a wall, attempting to block a direct shot on goal.

Dribble. This is a football skill where an attacking player moves with the ball at his/her feet. The skill comes in when he has to move around opposition players while still retaining control of the football.

Foul. This refers to a breach of the rules of the game. Events such as handling the football or illegally preventing an opponent from moving are fouls.

Free Kick. This is awarded to the team who has had a foul committed against them. The team in possession is allowed to kick the ball from a dead-ball situation.

Goal. The situation when the football enters the goal, wholly crossing the goal line as it does so. The team that performs this task most times within the game time wins the match.

Goal Kick. A dead-ball kick usually taken by the goalkeeper when the ball goes out of play after being touched last by a player of the opposition team.

Goalkeeper. This is the player who tends the goalmouth, attempting to prevent attacking players from kicking the ball into the goal. He/she is the only player who is allowed to handle the football (assuming he/she is within the penalty area). Once the goalkeeper has the ball in both hands, the ball is considered dead and no player is allowed to tackle him/her.

Goal Line. This is the edge of the play area going from corner flag to corner flag across width of the pitch. There are goal lines at both ends of the field.

Handball. This is the situation when the ball strikes the hand of a player. The referee will then award a free kick to the team who did not commit the offense. The player who handled the football is often penalised and given a warning card; yellow for a first offence, red for 2nd breach of the rules.

Header. This is when a player propels the football by the use of his/her head.

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In possession. This is the term used to describe the player or team who have a member with the ball under his/her control.

Linesman (Assistant Referee). One of two game officials that runs along the touch line. His/her job is to aid the referee and to make offside decisions. There is one on each end of the pitch, taking care of a pitch half each.

Marking. This is a technique employed by players to make it difficult for the opposition to pass the ball around. A player on the defending team gets close to, or 'marks' an attacker, thereby making it difficult for him to receive a pass without the 'marker' intercepting the ball.

Offside. This football rule states that a player cannot make a forward pass if the recipient is behind the defender nearest to his own goal. The decision point happens when the ball is kicked, rather than when the ball is in progress or has been received. If a player is standing in an 'offside' position when the ball is passed to him, then a free kick is given to the defending team at the place the pass was attempted from.

Due to the complex nature of this ruling, we will omit it from the computer game as it interrupts game flow and will lead to frustrations.

Pass. This is when a player kicks the football to another player on his/her team.

Penalty Area (Also known as 'the box'). This area is marked on the pitch and serves three purposes.

1. It defines the area in which a goalkeeper can legally handle the ball.
2. If the defending team commit an infringement of the rules within this area, the attacking team gets a penalty kick.
3. It defines the minimum distance which players can stand away from the ball when a penalty kick is taken. This is with the exception of the goalkeeper, referee and the player taking the kick itself.

Play-on. This is a decision the referee can make if the team in possession is fouled, but still retains possession. It prevents having to stop the game for the attacking team to take a free kick.

Red Card. This is the most severe reprimand a referee can impose on a player. He/she produces a red card for 2nd offences after a player has already been cautioned and given a yellow card. It can also be produced after serious foul play has occurred (which we do not feel is necessary in LEGO System Football). After being shown a red card by the referee, the player concerned must leave the field of play and take no further part in the game.

Referee. This is the key match official. He/she decides when a breach of the rules has occurred.

Throw-in. This situation happens when the ball leaves the field of play across on of the touch lines at the side of the pitch. The throw-in is given to the team who was without the ball just prior to it leaving the field.

Touch line. These are the markings that run lengthwise along the sides of the pitch. They define the out-of-bounds area from which throw-in decisions are given.

Yellow card. This is an official caution that the referee can impose on a player for committing a breach of the rules. A 2nd yellow card is the equivalent to a red card and the player is forced to retire from the game.

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